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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the experience of a Brazilian art teacher who relocated to Japan to teach. The paper focuses on the teacher's experience with Brazilian manners, Japanese culture, and art. It reports on her teaching experiences, such as her general aims in teaching, her recollections of several adult Venezuelan and Japanese female students, and her conversations (in English) with Japanese elementary school children. The paper discusses the nature of interaction between the body and the environment. (Contains 10 references.) (BT)

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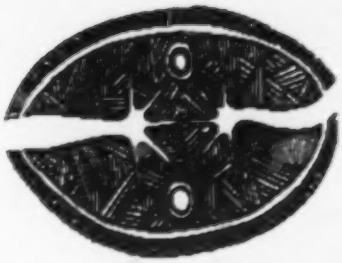

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"An Art Teacher's Doing and Being"

by

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Porto Alegre, Brazil

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AN ART TEACHER'S DOING AND BEING

Élida Maria Poitevin Pacheco *Porto Alegre- Brazil

Looking back, before the university I can visualise that the beginning of every thing was the evidence to be born in the south of a country; now called "developing country", where the European immigration enabled many chances and demanded other aspects to the Brazilian society.
Twenty years ago I was invited to join a group of teachers of Day Care Centre after finishing training of professional high school course- Organisation and Administration in Nursery School. I think it was my starting point in education. The modern times when mothers needed to work outside brought many possibilities in this field that was profitable to who could overcome limits and create own methods and activities. Maybe these are the roots of my own way of teaching, specially teaching art.
Although the arising of movement "Education of Art"(Herbert Read as one of the pioneers) happening around 1943; its thinking only started in earlier seventies, but the art education on these models has become stronger in eighties in south Brazil. The aesthetic dimension of education did not mean only artistic training but the development of mental growth on creativity. It was very important to differ imposed values and senses that the student should be adapted and the aid to take the student to discover and create own values and meanings. There are schools that include art in their curriculum then they think they are solving the creative development , discharging on art subject all responsibility of creative education.

BEING

I think that everyone who leaves own country for any reason must make efforts to keep healthy and able to look at the world in a positive way eventhough happy and well aimed. Personally I can say that even satisfied to be in Japan I had to struggle so much to keep my identity and the opportunities for growing. I discover that looking twice at the same thing could represent two possibilities of meaning instead only one. Learning again how to play through transferred meanings also could bring me the relief to that sadness or difficult situations.
Among so many choices I decided to continue my play centred work, enjoying not only the craft but also a likewise child symbolic game of "telling stories" while I realised my art work. I began to collect several kinds of papers in different textiles, colours and patterns. Tearing the papers in small pieces I discover the images and related them to a previously prepared paper with water colour's images .In this way I realised build a world that I called "My Way": "Sensibilization to simple things is the first step to educate the senses to enable the insights. I find important to play by eyes and heart without thinking about that "we have to do it". I do believe that making art we do not need expensive materials but ideas. Drawing is a thought-idea. Playing by forms or no forms it is possible to wake-up" the child that is still living inside us. Trough children's eyes the world is joyful and it is possible to go toward the life without being afraid to commit mistakes.
In my creative process the influence of Japanese culture is true and it is clear by using local papers, colours, ink, treatment of lines, but I did not loose my original way of spontaneous expression of my drawing .

Human society has an atomic structure. A pattern of attractions, repulsion and indifference can be discerned on the threshold between individual and group. Every person is positively

or negatively related to an indefinite number of socii(Moreno, 1953), who in turn may be related to him positively or negatively. Beside these two ways relations there are one way observable. Some "socii" are related to the central person and unknown to him and may be related to some "socii" unknown to them. An individual has from birth a structure of relationships around him and it is in continuous expansion as we grow up. Every individual, just as he is the focus of innumerous attractions and repulsion, also appears as the focus of innumerous roles which are related to the roles of other individuals... Just as he has at all times a set of friends and a set of enemies, he also has a range of roles and a range of counter-roles. It seems that people has to make the use of emotions all time to interact in the society and it may bring some troubles if people is not well prepared to face these relations, and keep a community in a status of equilibrium. How much of his emotional energy should undergo sublimation, or in turn how much should be spent by a particular individual with a given emotional capacity.

It is generally accepted that feelings and knowing are both centred to the creative process and the emotions we feel will impart particular understandings of the situations. Because feelings may be inappropriate the maker must learn when to trust them. The maker will be required to exercise judgement and after will be required to reject or accept elements from within the selected representation. Knowing involves the direct interaction of the maker with the environment into a pictorial form which will contain meaning of the viewer. Instead of straining too hard to discover his inner self, the student should objectively study the outside world(Ehrensweig, p.142).

The formative process of human being needs an effective aid to develop senses and meanings that can guide his action in the world. It should take the individual to have a reasonable harmony among feeling, thinking and doing. Making a "happy mixture"of elements to keep mental health and interacting in social environment needs creative responses to new situations or degree of novelty to an old situation. It is called spontaneity according to J.L. Moreno (1953). Spontaneity operates in the present, now and here; it propels the individual to a new situation or to an old situation. (the warming up process is the operational expression of spontaneity. Spontaneity training, paradoxical though it may seem, has two purposes, namely, to help the individual to "liberate himself from the script", and " from the clichés of a stereotyped [or stimulus- response] behaviour and to help him gain new personality dimensions through his ability to perceive and respond to new situations.

Thinking about the elements that I could stand by at that time in Japan I selected the relation with my Brazilian manners, my relation with Japanese culture and my relation with my art .

The relation with my country had the colours, forms, spontaneous expression of feelings, tastes, mixture cultures of south Brazil. The relation with Japan had the surprise factor, everything new to discover everyday, many observations from discovering that helped me to place myself among people who minded about other's opinion too much; the hierarchy tends to refrain their expression and the individual is suppressed in name of the group. In another hand the aesthetic living since morning to night reflected in minimal details as way of cutting the fish, setting plates with dishes, clothes, four seasons changes in nature or at home. It seems that after learning to write and read Japanese become an artist of accuracy, a master of detail and promptness.

The relation with my art had the relation with myself and a deep need to communicate something eventhough I could not explain what.

Gardner says that the close identification between the artist and his art work is an important component and necessary in the artistic process. If art involves the communication of deep affection and truths it is important that the communicator is involved in this activity and feel it as crucial. Any hesitation, doubt or inconsistency of his part it will be detected from audiences that learned to differentiate genuine communication from simulated one.

An identification to tradition and dominion of this tradition are important aspects in artist relation with his work.

Edmund Wilson affirmed that the worse quality to an artist is when he is not able to rely his own feelings and thought. The artistic truth is, only the effort to communicate artist's feelings and thinking as direct and complete as he could.

When art is characterised in this way, art reminds basic reliance, that sense of authenticity and spontaneity communicated by mothers during first weeks of life. However there is not any intermediate in this initial mutuality, this original interaction provides a model to all subsequent communications and the important qualities in each stage of life cycle that become assimilated and part of art works.
I think then I found my truth.
When creative energy is satisfied, it becomes a reliable support, giving comforting nutrition in dark moments and paves the way towards health. (Hill 1945)

DOING

However it is possible to find point of personal equilibrium and conquering a reasonable space to live, I think it must be very clear in our mind to enable sharing with others.
Feeling, being and doing became too attached then.
In this sharing I pointed the relevant elements were the focus of interest in Japan. Colours, texture, or what?
In my case the elements were the result by ink and its similarity to "calligraphy", light colour and specially the action while doing the art.
Ability, only, is not enough. The lack of strong feelings and meaningful experiences may hinder the creative spirit but offering right stimulus might evoke a creativity stream.
(Howard Gardner, 1994)

REPORTING EXPERIENCES:

Teaching "My Way" :
General aims:

"This world is not a rigid point or genetic program. The process is dynamic and it occurs on several levels; discovering our power and new forms to face challenges, opportunities, conflicts and nice things... The source of creativity such as any creative experience is our existence. All expressive contents on art as figurative or abstract are existential contents. The inspiration does not represent on itself the concrete solution of problems but indicates the direction for certain possible relations because the most important is how to order the elements instead of elements properly. Creating things means to be able to comprehend and integrate its content in another level of consciousness. It means to be able to condense it on languages, introducing new order and forms.
We can not compare art works for levels of abilities, skills, virtuous or tracing because the artistic creation does not matter only abilities but expression. The style represents kind of sign on each "mark" of expressed things; it is more than it...the understanding of live."

Report of teaching - Adult Venezuelan and Japanese female students:

"V" student :

Data: Over thirty years old , experienced marriage, no children, two abortions.
Foreigner in Japan for about five years, conservative country and mother extremely religious. She experienced financial difficulties , many kinds of work and partners; the latest one was living together for about three years at that time. Her first experience on art was in her country during approximately four years expressing lines and geometric forms. She stayed under my supervision from 96 May to Dec., with more than 150 art works.

I think one of aspects that determine to keep or no the artistic work is the self satisfaction established for adequate method on the medium of expression. Trying to understand the student personality only through words without entering in their graphic world or contrariwise might represent nothing about living in general. Myself, I tried to obtain the information naturally when the student was willing to express it. In this way family data, emotional situation were the first ones to be expressed spontaneously.

Anyway, in order to know her graphic way better I have done some perceptive and free hand drawing, light and shadow, lines and various materials trying to improve her experience well as possible. The use of tore paper and water colour before ink drawing seemed to influence the relief because of the nature of play. All activities began after warming up and expressing feelings.
Drawings:
Serial 1 : Daily images. Repetitions not organised of conflicts and specially urban images. Her personality appeared step by step from this serial and she diminished the use of paper, keeping the water vivid colour and ink.
Serial 2 : Images that were done during the night, sometimes compulsively, out of control. Circular figures suggesting "mandala", emphasis on colour and almost no use of ink.
Serial 3 : Expressed images from self- disclosure. The "maternity matter" and anxieties about the relationship with her partner such as ethical questions.
I consider that detached information may not be taken as fixed points in any analysis because the most important should be the teacher's sensibility in a productive process of the student, in order to produce benefits. The term "benefits" was used considering the individual instead generalised situations. "Benefits" were those which the individual is able to change behaviour and/or self aid.(Robbins & Sibbley, 1976)

"J "student :

Single, over thirty years old, introverted personality avoiding places with many people, showing herself or risk. It seemed she did nct have experience on affective relations with opposite sex. Self confidence was a delicate factor of personality , and the worries about other's opinion were not different of traditional Japanese thinking.
The experience with this student was great in her process, longer than "V ", and latent effects are still in course. She did not have experience of life, precisely in education of emotions in her artistic process and technique. When she asked me to "teach or train' her I worried about emotional expressing and no experience on art doing.
As she presented distortions in the images and inflexible line I worried about she feels frustrated if she could not make the images she would like to.
At first we did basic exercises with many stimulus and no colour and slowly the development towards creation. The taste of discovering and multiplied opportunities of observation helping whole senses and combining the intelligence and sensibility were associated to pedagogic aspects on art education as well kinds of language and expression in way of global action.
My main goal was centred on fundamental attitude and habit of thinking (creativity, criticising, analysis and synthesis).
I organised her drawings in order that they were. Between 8th and 9th drawings there were a serial of thirty or forty drawings with motifs and self discovering.
Considering that in this case to have own style in matured development would be an audacious goal I bet on artistic experience and joy, creating one, two, ten, ...works until to achieve stimuli and tension enable artistic autonomy, overcoming own limits and consequently technical obstacles not imposed but from her own perception. Thinking about it I could not cut the interfere in her wish to use the scissors instead of hand tore papers(drawings 1 to 7). After many introductory exercises the disclosure was evident from 8th drawing on this technique. She started to think about herself and to use the hand to tear the papers such as to use brush instead of ball-point.
Since the beginning I clarified that we were not supposed to do any examination to proof her capacity so we appointed an exhibition with another "V " student aiming to show the process, not results trying to educate the audience with different view on art exhibition. (people go to an art exhibition to see "beauty" always saying they do not "understand the meaning "and making many questions instead thinking own meaning.
The effects were unexpected because she depended on me for everything that should be her responsibility. As I did not assume her works she was very irritated during the exhibition. (to be present longer as possible, hostess the guests, showing herself through her art works...)
She could express her feelings and opened the possibility to look at herself according to her words in a written letter.

I was very happy with all these happenings even though she could not understand it clearly. The wounds may start a heal process. The catharsis is painful and wounded healer. After that she was absent about 6 months but contacted me to continue. Her process had new results, specially on the nature of her lines and images. I emphasised the importance in the artistic process specially when the action is not intellectualised in the loss of feelings and impulses of pleasure. Maintaining the curious nature of child, doing it by mind and heart, is necessary in the healing process. The use of "make believe "on art was useful to work all these aspects.

Developing Spontaneity on communication:

This experience is related to English conversation with elementary school children.
In order to develop spontaneity on communication artistic expression and performing activities(cooking, play, etc...) was useful in my work with groups of five or six children. I consider the importance of imagination and play associated to drawing or modelling promote the habit of thinking and diminish the tension and anxiety on showing themselves and speaking in front of others.
According to J.L.Moreno's theory the most important is increase the level of spontaneity instead of combating the anxiety because it makes the student to have new answers to external situations. The meaning of activities that take it to an effective "warming up" certainly helps the results.
I considered the following aspects.:

- to participate is the best part of any experience.
- to avoid any kind of model or stereotyped figures.
- to think about a process not "ugly or beautiful" result but the expression in children's world on creativity and spontaneity.

The results of this process had some expectable cultural aspects as the evidence of stereotyped eyes in human figures. (Japanese comics and animation have great influence among children and teenagers) and light colours.
Psychologists have been fascinated by the expressive quality of colours and their quick association with feelings and mood states. While a comprehensive account of the relationship between colour and affect has not been worked out, evidence drawn from diverse domains and from different levels of analysis strongly suggests such connection.(Golomb, 1992)

Experiencing Group Catharsis with Artistic Collaboration

Plan and purpose:
At first I imagined an activity to sensibilizate the group by steps, stimulating not only emotions but also cognition. Considering that it was directed to Japanese community and not only academic field, I considered aspects about resistance to take part of activities without a link among environment, people and activity. Therefore I tried to mix all knowledge in this field without hurting the personality or artistic of partners.

Performance:
The artistic collaboration was a point of sensibilization in the same culture to "jump"in to a role playing with foreigner (Élida).
Playing the idea "Yoru no sampo"(walking by the night) I aimed to estimulate imagination playing situations we do not live every day. Kawamura Satoru, Japanese poet, artistic director and dancer, was contacted then. I think that in Japan the "world of words" demands many ways of understanding and classify the people in a very strict way.
Once established the cultural contact the formality was diminishing towards the childish joy. Art and play associated brings benefits to the mind and body. Play is an active way to master anxiety, to learn social adaptive behaviour and to satisfy human needs vicariously. (Singer, 1977)
The room was prepared with many objects along the way. (apples, oranges, string, candles, musical instruments, bones, lighters, clothes, dummy, bags, balloons, etc.) There was not

special desk to the panellist (Mr. Kawamura) and the audience could pick chairs up from a pile and have a seat wherever they wanted.
1st part : Introductory talking Élida, Kawamura
Kawamura's speech about The Word
2nd part : Walking around the pre prepared room in complete silence.
From time to time one participant is chosen to read loudly a given phrase.
It happened for 30 min.
3rd part : Elida asked them to stop and look around their environment. They noticed that everything changed because the audience threw balloons, set on fire the candles, ate the fruit, modified the place of objects, wearing clothes, etc.
Likewise cells they were requested to become two, two became four, four became eight...
New group likewise a new body received a name.
After that we had a symbolic celebration.
The results were without precedence in Fukuoka University. We had 44 participants and among them many housewives who had never experienced that before.
The poet also experienced artistic collaboration, and performance at university.
All participants had meaningful influence but the characteristics of leadership also had great influence. One part does not exist without other, the syntonization between who orients and who is oriented needs to reach levels of exchange in order to arise the conditions of "change". This state of mutual benefits in syntonization increases the probability of intelligent insights that provoke the artistic creative process.

Conclusion:

As the body, the organism, is continually modified by its interaction with the environment, by an ongoing process of exchange between inner and outer, so is the self. When we speak of the self we are referring to a process and not an entity. "Selfing" would more aptly describe it...the pattern is new in every moment and every moment is a new and shocking valuation of all we have been.(T.S.Eliot, Four Quarters)
Going somewhere and becoming part of this it is necessary to prepare ourselves to face new situations every time. Facing new situations only is not enough because we must keep flexibility and develop conditions to be effectively.
On Moreno's thought the human relations are the core of our psyche, from the mother(or substitute) infant link to the most elaborate, collective ones. And also the use of spontaneity as the fundamental, royal way towards truth and harmony between the people as well as in themselves. It is a positive one that maintains creativity as central to human nature.
Creativity is crucial to human survival. It leads humanity to respond constructively to new situations, an essential capacity in a constantly changing, always somewhat unpredictable world. The more spontaneous and creative is the personality the better it can cope with the flow of new problems of life is sure to present.
It is not possible to say which culture is better because the worse quality to an artist is when he can not rely on his true feelings and thinking. This evidence is clear in artistic works therefore our vision of art and artistic process based on occidental modern culture is necessarily limited. All multiple difficulties involved to make possible to understand a civilisation can be overcome through an exam of aesthetic products of given culture - its mind and contents.

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